





1857

---

Speech of William H. Seward at Detroit.

---

---

Journal of the American Medical Association

---

The Slaveholding Class Dominant in the Republic.

---

S P E E C H

OF

WILLIAM H. SEWARD,

AT DETROIT, OCTOBER 2, 1856.

---

WASHINGTON, D. C.

PUBLISHED BY THE REPUBLICAN ASSOCIATION OF WASHINGTON.

Buell & Blanchard, Printers.

1857.



## SPEECH OF MR. SEWARD.

---

FELLOW-CITIZENS: The process of empire-building in the United States is in some respects new and peculiar. We had not here a State which was compact and complete at its beginning, and we have not conquered other nations or planted colonies, near or distant, to be held as dependencies by force alone. On the contrary, we had a broad foundation laid, upon which were raised at first only thirteen colonies, a portion of an indefinite number, which were to be erected during a long future, all of one material and equal strength, and all to be combined inseparably, according to one great original design.

New States, ultimately to become members of the Federal Union, pass through stages of unorganized colonization, and of dependence and pupillage under the Federal Government, or that of some foreign Power, and receive their biases and even form their social institutions during those early stages. Nevertheless, so intimate is the union of all these States, that each exerts no measured influence upon every other, while the fortune of every one is inseparably involved in the common destiny of all.

You will infer at once from these statements that the nature and character of the institutions, of even any one maturing Territory in the United States, are subjects of the highest and possibly even vital importance. That, although caprice and oppression may be harmlessly practiced by other nations upon their provinces and colonies, yet such wrongs, committed by our Federal Government against our growing Territories, are equally injurious to those Territories, and dangerous, if not disastrous, to the whole Republic.

It is my purpose to show you, on this occasion, that the slaveholding class of the American people is systematically and successfully perverting the administration of the Government, especially in regard to the Territories, so as to change the Constitution, and endanger the stability, welfare, and liberty of the Union.

First, inasmuch as this proposition must seem to you bold, if not new, I shall show from gen-

eral principles that it may possibly be true; and secondly, I shall establish its truth by undeniable demonstration.

First. The proposition may be true. Property is an essential element of civil society. So is liberty, which, properly understood, is only the equal security of all citizens against oppression. How to adjust the balance between property and liberty in States, is the great problem of government. Property is always jealous of enlarged liberty, and especially so when it is based on relations subversive of natural justice, which is nothing more than equality among men. Property, therefore, has always a bias towards oppression, and it derives power to oppress from its own nature, the watchfulness of its possessors, and the ease with which they can combine. Liberty is exposed to the danger of such oppression by means of the inconsiderateness and the jealousies which habitually prevail among subjects or citizens. In every State, all the property classes sympathize with each other through the force of common instincts of fear, cupidity, and ambition, and are easily marshaled under the lead of one which becomes dominant, and represents the whole. Wherever the rights and duties of the property classes are defined and regulated, with sufficient constraints to prevent oppression, and liberty is at the same time so bounded as to secure property against social or individual aggression, there the people are free and the State is republican. Where this balance is not accurately adjusted, liberty is abridged, and a property class administers the Government, in the form of an aristocracy, or a monarchy, or a despotism. The mere mention of the names of Switzerland, Venice, France, (her various alternations being remembered,) Great Britain, and Russia, furnishes all needful illustrations of these positions. Human nature and the physical elements of society are everywhere the same. It is therefore possible that social and political errors and evils, which have frequently existed elsewhere, may find entrance here.

Secondly. The allegation of the perversion of



the Government by the slave-property class, which I have made, is true. First, let us see whether such a direction of the Government as it describes was designed or expected by its founders. On the contrary, they laid the foundations of the States, not in property—much less in slave property—but in the natural rights or political equality of men. They established few safeguards of property, knowing how apt it is to take care of itself, while they built strong bulwarks around liberty, knowing how easily liberty is always overthrown. The Declaration of Independence, which no weak or wicked citizen then dared to pronounce a series of abstractions, recited as the fundamental truth of the great political society which it ushered into the presence of nations, that “all men are created equal”—“endowed by their Creator with the inalienable rights” of “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness;” and that “Governments are instituted among men to secure those rights,” and derive their powers only “from the consent of the governed.”

The Convention which framed the Constitution submitted it to the American people by a letter bearing the signature of George Washington, in which its character was defined with a steady hand in a clear light. “Individuals,” said the Convention, “entering into society must give up a share of liberty to preserve the rest. The magnitude of the sacrifice must depend as well on situation and circumstances as on the object to be attained. In all our deliberations on this subject, the object which the Convention has kept steadily in view was the consolidation of the Union, in which is involved our prosperity, felicity, safety, perhaps our national existence. This important consideration, seriously and deeply impressed on our minds, led each State in the Convention to be less rigid on points of inferior magnitude than might have been otherwise expected.” An analysis of the Constitution, especially including its amendments, justifies this declaration, that the points on which liberality of concession to property was exercised were only those of inferior magnitude, and that neither prosperity, felicity, safety, nor national existence, was intended to be put at hazard for the preservation of a mere remnant or shadow of liberty. The people, speaking in the Constitution, declared their high objects in that great transaction in words simple, majestic, and comprehensive, “To form a perfect Union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquillity, provide for the common defence, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and to our posterity.” They boldly and directly laid the axe to the roots of privileges and of classes, they broke the very mainsprings of aristocracy, or at least they attempted to do so by ordaining that “no title of nobility shall be granted by the United States, or by any State;” and that “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” Although the people well knew nearly every fourth person in the new Republic was actually a slave, and that perhaps one of every

twenty persons was a slaveholder—and so they well understood the existence among themselves of caste and class—yet they pertinaciously refused to recognise either, and, on the contrary, treated of all the subjects of the Government, under the common and promiscuous description of “persons”—thus confounding classes, and recognising only men. While they aimed at an ultimate extinction of that caste, and the class built upon it, by authorizing Congress to prohibit the importation of “persons” who were slaves after 1808, and to tax it severely in the mean time, and while they necessarily left to the individual States the management of the domestic relations of all classes and castes existing therein, they especially declared what should be the rights and relations of all “persons,” so far as they were to be affected by the action of the Federal Government which they were establishing. “The privilege of the writ of *habeas corpus* shall not be suspended, unless when, in case of rebellion or invasion, the public security shall require it.” “No bill of attainder or *ex post facto* law shall be passed.” “No capitation or other direct tax shall be laid, unless in proportion to the census.” “The United States shall guaranty to every State in the Union a republican form of Government.” “The right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed.” “The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated.” They ordained “trial by jury,” prohibited “excessive bail and excessive fines, and cruel and unusual punishments,” and “reserved to the States and to the people all the powers of Government not expressly delegated to the United States.”

Among these broad and comprehensive reservations of liberty, only two inferior and guarded stipulations were made with the slaveholding class—namely, that “no person held to service or labor in one State, under the laws thereof, escaping into another, shall, in consequence of any law or regulation therein, be discharged from such service or labor, but shall be delivered up, on claim of the party to whom such service or labor may be due;” and that “representatives and taxes shall be apportioned among the several States which shall be included within this Union, according to their respective numbers, which shall be determined by adding to the whole number of free persons, including those bound to service for a term of years, and excluding Indians not taxed, *three-fifths of all other persons.*”

It is manifest that Congress cannot, without violating the rights of the people reserved by their Constitution, grant any favor or privilege or advantage to the slaveholding class, or even ordain or permit Slavery to exist within the exclusive sphere of the Federal jurisdiction.

The spirit of the Declaration of Independence and of the Constitution of the United States, thus flagrantly hostile to classes, and especially to the slaveholding class, entered largely into the contemporaneous Constitutions and laws of most of the States. All of them established re-



publican forms of Government. Most of them asserted the political equality of men. All of them prohibited orders of nobility and ecclesiastical classes, estates in mortmain, and estates by primogeniture. Seven States immediately or speedily prohibited Slavery, and all of the others earnestly debated the same great and benign reform. Finally, though unable thus early to abolish Slavery in six of the States where it already existed, the people in the Revolutionary Congress effectually provided for excluding it forever in that part of the national domain which laid northwest of the Ohio, and in the States which were thereafter to be established there.

I think, fellow-citizens, that I have shown to your abundant satisfaction that such a direction of the Administration to the establishment and aggrandizement of the slaveholding class, as I have charged, if it indeed exists, is a perversion of the Constitution of the United States.

Seventy years of our national history have been fulfilled. Fix your attention for a moment now on the slaveholding class, as it now exists. Although it has been abolished by State legislation in seven of the first thirteen States, and although nine free States which exclude it have been since admitted into the Union, yet the slaveholding class nevertheless stands erect and firm in fifteen of the present thirty-one States, numbering 347,000 "persons," on the basis of 3,204,000 other "persons" held to labor or service by the laws thereof, valued at twelve hundred millions of dollars, combined practically with all the real estates in those States. This class spreads itself on the one bank of the Mississippi to the Kansas river, and on the other to the Ohio, and along the Atlantic coast from the banks of the Delaware to those of the Rio Grande. In the States where this class exists, it is not merely secure—it is permanent and completely dominant, to the exclusion not merely of all civil rights on the part of the "persons who are held to labor or service" by it, but to the inhibition of voluntary emancipation by the owners of slaves, to the practical exclusion of free labor from the State, and with it freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of the ballot-box, freedom of education, freedom of literature, and freedom of popular assemblies. Thus established by municipal institutions, the slaveholding class has become the governing power in each of the slaveholding States, and it practically chooses thirty of the sixty-two members of the Senate, ninety of the two hundred and thirty-three members of the House of Representatives, and one hundred and five of the two hundred and ninety-five electors of President and Vice President of the United States.

Let us now repair to the Federal Capital. You see, that although it is sadly wanting in the elements of industry and enterprise which distinguish the hundred cities of the free States, yet it is a respectable metropolis, rich in costly national structures, monuments, and gardens. This elegant and tasteful edifice is the palace of the President of the United States. Its incumbent, you know him right well, (for he has acquired

a painful notoriety,) is a confessed apologist of the slave-property class, a libeller of freemen and free States which resist the aggressions of that class, an abettor of the extension of Slavery and of the enlargement of the domain of that class, by the violation of time-honored compacts, by armed usurpation, conquest, and judicial corruption. You remember his history. He had been equally obscure among civilians and generals, but he was deemed reliable by the slave-property class to suppress debate on its high pretensions, and he was therefore advanced to the Chief Magistracy, to the exclusion of the most heroic, magnanimous, and successful military chief the country has produced.

This broad highway is Pennsylvania avenue; it leads between stately store-houses and dwellings, occupied by slaveholders with their slaves, to the Capitol. We ascend the terrace, through groves embellished with statues and fountains, and enter the Senate Chamber. The Senate is before us. It is an august assembly of ambassadors, deputed by thirty-one equal States. It is august by reason of its functions. It is an Executive Council, and exercises a negative voice on all appointments to all places of trust, honor, or profit, in the Republic, and a negative also on all treaties of the Republic with foreign nations. As a Court of Impeachments it tries all political crimes committed by public agents, and as a legislative body its concurrence is necessary to the passage of all the laws of the Union. The age, experience, and dignity, of its members, together with the facility for transacting business which it derives from the smallness of its numbers, has enabled it to become the dominating political power in the Republic. The chair belongs to the Vice President of the United States. He who was last advanced to that office is now dead. You remember him. He was chosen from a slave State. The Senate elected in his place David R. Atchison. You know him well. He is chief statesman and captain in the usurpation and conquest recently effected by the slaveholding class in Kansas. When his duties in that relation called him away from the Capital, his place there was assigned to Jesse D. Bright, of Indiana. You know him also. He is acceptable and approved by the slave-property class, and he has deserved to be.

At the feet of the presiding officer you see three Secretaries, while his chair is surrounded by printers, sergeants-at-arms, door-keepers, and pages. Each of them is either an active or passive advocate of the policy of the slaveholding class.

The business of the day opens with a debate on the relations of the country towards Great Britain and Central America—a theme involving not merely immediate peace or war, but ultimately the continental ascendancy of the Republic. The debate is instituted on the motion of the Committee on Foreign Relations. The chairman of that committee is Mr. James M. Mason, of Virginia, author of the last and most notorious of the fugitive slave laws. The other members are, Mr. Stephen A. Douglas, the founder of that curious and evanescent system of

Territorial Government, whilom known by the name of Popular Sovereignty, but now recognised as Executive Usurpation; Mr. John A. Slidell, of Louisiana, the same who has proposed a withdrawal of the naval squadron employed in suppressing the slave trade on the coast of Africa; Mr. John M. Clayton, of Delaware, who pronounces the prohibition of Slavery forever contained in the Missouri Compromise unconstitutional; Mr. John B. Weller, of California, who upholds the Executive Usurpation and conquest in Kansas; and with these gentlemen is associated one opponent of the slaveholding class, namely, my honorable and excellent colleague, Mr. Hamilton Fish, of New York.

The debate has ended while we have been canvassing the committee by which it was instituted. And now the question has changed to one of hardly less grave importance—namely, whether the President of the United States shall be inhibited from employing the army as a police to enforce the tyrannical laws of the slaveholding conquerors of Kansas. This proposition of the House of Representatives is opposed by the Committee on Finance. That committee has for its chairman Mr. Robert M. T. Hunter, also of Virginia. He is the same Senator who has just now proposed to rescind that vote of the Senate which rather admitted than declared that the assault made by Preston S. Brooks, a Representative of South Carolina, in the Senate Chamber, on Mr. Charles Sumner, a Senator of Massachusetts, for words spoken in debate, was a breach of the privileges of the Senate. The other members of this great committee are Mr. James A. Pearce, of Maryland, whom you see in his place, franking for circulation his declaration in favor of the slaveholders' candidate for the Presidency; Mr. Crittenden, of Kentucky, the same Senator who, as Attorney General, removed Mr. Fillmore's scruples concerning the suspension of the *habeas corpus* in the new Fugitive Slave Law; Mr. Stuart, of Michigan; Mr. Brodhead, of Pennsylvania; and Mr. Toucey, of Connecticut—all of whom are denouncers of that agitation which consists in exposing the aggressions of the slaveholding class upon the liberties of the American people.

The Senate needs but little time on a question so simple as that which has thus been raised. It has already vindicated the President's prerogative, and has now reached the third among the Orders of the Day—namely, the Improvement of the Navigation of the Mississippi, a measure introduced by the Committee on Commerce. This committee has an aspect of unusual equality. For although it embraces Mr. Clay, of Alabama, and Mr. Benjamin, of Louisiana, who are eminent champions of the rights of slaveholders, it nevertheless has for its other members Mr. Hamlin, the newly elected Governor of Maine, the very ultra opponent of the slaveholding class who is now addressing you, and Mr. Dodge, of Wisconsin, who is its chairman. But this equality is in part accidental. The chairman votes against the slaveholding class, under the plea of instructions given him by the State which he represents. Mr. Hamlin

was yet in full communion with the slaveholding Democracy when he was appointed to this committee, and my own place on it was assigned to me while as yet I was a National Whig, and not as now a Republican.

The debates in the Senate interrupt us. Let us therefore forget them, and proceed with our examination of the constitution of its committees. The Committee on Manufactures seems to have been framed with decided impartiality. At its head is Mr. Wright of New Jersey, a supporter of the policy of the slaveholding class, while its other members are Mr. Allen of Rhode Island, a moderate opponent of the Nebraska and Kansas law, and Mr. Harlan of Iowa, Mr. Wilson of Massachusetts, and Mr. Trumbull of Illinois, three distinguished and effective advocates of Freedom.

I admit a similar equality in the constitution of the Committee on Agriculture, for it consists of the same Mr. Allen and Mr. Harlan, together with the indomitable Mr. Wade of Ohio, who are friends of Freedom, and also Mr. Thomson of New Jersey, and Mr. Hunter of Virginia, who are defenders of the rights of slaveholders.

Glad to be just to that class, I acknowledge with pleasure that equal liberality has been manifested in the organization of the Committee on the Militia. Its chairman is Mr. Houston, of Texas, and with him is associated Mr. Bell, a true representative of New Hampshire, as she was of old, is now, and always ought to be; and these certainly are not overbalanced by Mr. Dodge of Wisconsin, Mr. Biggs of North Carolina, and Mr. Thompson of Kentucky.

I must nevertheless claim as a drawback on the magnanimity of the Senate, that these three last committees—namely, those "on Manufactures," "on Agriculture," and "on the Militia"—have charge of public interests which have long since been renounced by the Federal Government in favor of the States, and that consequently those committees are understood to be merely nominal, and that in fact they never submit any measures for the consideration of Congress.

On the other hand we see prudence, if not jealousy, visibly manifested in the constitution of the Committee on the Army and the Navy, the two great physical forces of the Republic. The first of these consists of Mr. Weller of California, Mr. Fitzpatrick of Alabama, Mr. Jones of Tennessee, Mr. Iverson of Georgia, and Mr. Pratt of Maryland, all of whom favor the largest liberty to the slaveholding class; and the other is composed of Mr. Mallory of Florida, Mr. Slidell of Louisiana, Mr. Thomson of New Jersey, Mr. James of Rhode Island, all reliable supporters of that class, together with the independent, upright, and candid John Bell of Tennessee.

The slaveholding class is a careful guardian of the Public Domain. Mr. Stuart, of Michigan, is chairman of the Committee on Public Lands. He is, as you well know, of the opinion that the agitation of Slavery is the prolific cause of the unhappy overthrow of Freedom in Kansas, and his associates are Mr. Johnson of Arkansas, Mr. Clayton of Delaware, Mr. Mallory of Florida,



and Mr. Pugh of Ohio, who all are tolerant of that overthrow, and Mr. Foot, who so faithfully represents the ever-reliable freemen of Vermont.

Mr. Benjamin, of Louisiana, presides over the Committee on Private Claims upon the Public Domain, supported by Mr. Biggs of North Carolina and Mr. Thompson of Kentucky, with whom are associated Mr. Foster, a Senator of redeemed Connecticut, and Mr. Wilson of Massachusetts.

Negotiations with the Indian tribes are continually required, to provide room for the migration of the slaveholder with his slaves. The Committee on Indian Affairs, excluding all Senators from free States, consists of Mr. Sebastian of Arkansas, Mr. Rusk of Texas, Mr. Toombs of Georgia, Mr. Brown of Mississippi, Mr. Reid of North Carolina, and Mr. Bell of Tennessee.

Two representatives of the interests of Freedom—Mr. Wade of Ohio, and Mr. Fessenden of Maine—hold places on the Committee on Claims against the Government; but they are quite overbalanced by Mr. Brodhead of Pennsylvania, Mr. Geyer of Missouri, Mr. Iverson of Georgia, and Mr. Yulee of Florida.

The Post Office in its transactions is more nearly domestic and municipal than any other Department of the Government, and comes home to the business and bosoms of the whole people. Mr. Rusk, of Texas, is chairman of the Committee on the Post Office and Post Roads, and his associates are Mr. Yulee of Florida, Mr. Adams of Mississippi, Mr. Jones of Iowa, balanced by Mr. Collamer of Vermont, and Mr. Durkee of Wisconsin.

No inconsiderate legislation favorable to freemen must be allowed in the Senate, no constitutional legislation necessary to the security of Slavery must be spared. The Committee on the Judiciary, charged with the care of the public jurisprudence, consists of Mr. Butler of South Carolina, Mr. Bayard of Delaware, Mr. Geyer of Missouri, Mr. Toombs of Georgia, Mr. Toucey of Connecticut, and Mr. Pugh of Ohio. It was the Committee on the Judiciary which, in 1845, reported the bill for removing from the State courts into the Federal courts private actions brought against Federal officers for injuries committed by them under color of their authority.

The slaveholding class watches with paternal jealousy over the slaveholding Capital of the United States. The Committee on the District of Columbia consists of Mr. Brown of Mississippi, Mr. Pratt of Maryland, Mr. Mason of Virginia, and Mr. Reid of North Carolina, together with Mr. Allen of Rhode Island.

The Committee on Territories has care of the colonization, organization, and admission of new States, and so is in fact the most important of all the committees in the Senate. Mr. Douglas, of Illinois, is its chairman, and his associates are his willing supporters, Mr. Jones of Iowa, Mr. Sebastian of Arkansas, Mr. Biggs of North Carolina, together with Mr. Bell of Tennessee, and the able and faithful Mr. Collamer of Vermont.

Finally, the science and literature of the country must not be unduly directed to the prejudice of the interests of Slavery. The Committee on the Library take charge of this great intellectual interest, and it consists of Mr. Pearce of Maryland, Mr. Cass, the eminent Senator from Michigan, and Mr. Bayard of Delaware.

You will say that my review of the committees of the Senate is unjust, because you have not heard me mention the names of those distinguished champions of Freedom in the Senate, John P. Hale of New Hampshire, and Charles Sumner of Massachusetts. Behold the places assigned to them! Mr. Hale graces the Committees on "Revolutionary Claims" and on "Public Buildings," and Mr. Sumner fills a seat in the "Committee on Pensions."

Do not think for a moment that I impeach the justice of the Senate in the construction of its committees. When you learn how strong the slaveholding interest in the Senate really is, you will perceive at once that its representatives are more than just—they are even liberal and generous to its adversaries. You shall decide the question for yourselves, when I shall have called the roll. Taking the admission of Kansas into the Union, under the Topeka Constitution, as a test, the classification of the Senate is as follows: Rhode Island two voices for Slavery, Connecticut one, New Jersey one, Pennsylvania two, Delaware two, Maryland two, Virginia two, North Carolina two, South Carolina two, Georgia two, Alabama two, Mississippi two, Louisiana two, Ohio one, Kentucky two, Tennessee two, Indiana one, Illinois one, Missouri one, Arkansas two, Michigan two, Florida two, Texas two, Iowa one, Wisconsin one, California one—in all, twenty-six States, giving forty-three voices for Slavery. For Freedom—Maine two, New Hampshire two, Vermont two, Massachusetts two, Connecticut one, New York two, Ohio one, Illinois one, Iowa one—only nine States, giving only fourteen voices for Freedom.

Freemen of Michigan, I think I perceive that you are oppressed with the atmosphere of the Senate of the United States. I cheerfully leave it. We have crossed the Rotunda, so rich in memorials of the patriotism and valor of our ancestors, and now we are in the Hall of Representatives. The House of Representatives consists of two hundred and thirty-three members, chosen severally by the people in Representative districts. One hundred and forty-three of them are chosen by the people of the free States. This House virtually holds a controlling power over the Senate and the President, through its exclusive right to originate bills for raising public revenue. It is in fact the Commons of America. But, alas! if the Senate be a strong citadel of Slavery, the House of Representatives is by no means an impregnable bulwark of Freedom. The slaveholding class enjoys no advantages which have not at some time been surrendered to it by the House of Representatives. To-day, indeed, we boast of a regenerated House of Representatives, faithful to the interests of human Freedom. But, after all, our boast is founded less on any vantage ground actually gained by

the House of Representatives, than on a retreat safely effected from the late legislative contest, instead of an absolute capitulation. God knows that I do not undervalue the brave and true champions of Freedom who have honored humanity so long in the House of Representatives: John Quincy Adams, Giddings, Thaddeus Stevens, Preston King, David Wilmot, John A. King, heretofore; and now, Grow, and Banks, and Burlingame, and Howard, and Sherman, and Morgan, and Colfax, and the Washburnes all. But I ask, nevertheless, what have we saved in this last, our only successful contest in the House of Representatives? Whitfield, the representative of the Missouri borderers in Kansas, only expelled, and Reeder, the true representative of that Territory, rejected; a Speaker, faithful to justice and humanity, barely chosen by a plurality; an investigation into the atrocious crimes of Kansas barely sustained; a meager plurality vote for the admission of Kansas, under the Topeka Constitution, rendered half worthless by an embarrassment of the question with an incongruous vote for a reorganization of the Territorial Government; and an eight months struggle for the equal independence of the House of Representatives, closed with a concession of absolute independence to the Senate, by consenting to its dictation in a bill directing the supplies for the support of the civil authorities and the army of the United States.

Enough of the House of Representatives. Come along with me, fellow-citizens. This passage, circuitous and descending, leads us into the chamber of the Supreme Court of the United States. It is an imposing tribunal, a great conservative department of the Government. It regulates the administration of justice between citizens of the different States, and between States themselves. Its members are independent of the Legislature and of the President, and it has the power of setting aside even laws and treaties, if it find them subversive of the Constitution of the United States. The court is just opened for the business of the day. How fitly does the proclamation of its opening close with the invocation, "God save the United States and this honorable court." See, also, how the memories of the benefactors of mankind are held in honor here. There is the statue of John Jay, the author of emancipation in New York. Alas, our imagination has quite deluded us. The court consists of a Chief Justice and eight Associate Justices. Of these, five were called from slave States, and four from free States. The opinions and bias of each of them were carefully considered by the President and Senate when he was appointed. Not one of them was found wanting in soundness of politics, according to the slaveholder's exposition of the Constitution, and those who were called from the free States were even more distinguished in that respect than their brethren from the slaveholding States.

We have thus completed our survey of the supreme authorities of the Republic. Let us now leave the Capitol, and look into the subordinate departments.

In this modest edifice is the Department of State. It is the depository of the seals of the Republic. It directs and regulates the merely Executive operations of government at home, and all its foreign relations. Its agents are numbered by the hundred, and they are dispersed in all civilized countries throughout the world. From the chief here in his bureau to the Secretaries of Legation in South America, Great Britain, France, Russia, Turkey, and China, there is not one of these agents who has ever rebuked or condemned the extension or aggrandizement of Slavery. There is not one who does not even defend and justify it. There is not one who does not maintain that the flag of the United States covers with its protection the slaves of the slaveholding class on the high seas.

In the majestic pile behind this unique but graceful colonnade, sits the Secretary of the Treasury. He manages the revenues and expenditures of the United States, and guards and improves their sources, commerce, and the public lands. Seventy millions of dollars annually pass through his hands into those of other public agents, contractors, creditors, and foreign Powers. He directs the movements of agents who, scattered abroad in all the seaports and in all the States and Territories, are counted by the thousands. His wand contracts or opens banks, and frees or embargoes the merchant ships which carry on a trade, domestic and foreign, greater than that which any other nation but one has ever maintained. All the national revenues are raised in such a way as to favor most the purely agricultural labor of slaves, and to afford the least impulse to the great wheel of manufacture, which is turned only by the hands of freemen. The custom-houses and the public lands pour forth two golden streams—one into the elections, to procure votes for the slaveholding class; and the other into the Treasury, to be enjoyed by those whom it shall see fit to reward with places in the public service.

A walk of half a mile brings us to the portico of a great edifice, faultlessly conforming to the best style of Grecian architecture. This is the Department of the Interior, and here is its Secretary. He is charged with the ministerial part of the administration of justice, with the disposition of the public lands, the construction of buildings, the granting of patents, and the payment of pensions. His agents abound especially in the Territories and States, built on the public domain. You see them here among yourselves, and know them well. Did you ever know one of them whose devotion to the slaveholding class could be shaken by any miracle less than that which converted Saul of Tarsus, a persecutor of saints, into a preacher of righteousness?

Merely turning a short corner, we reach the General Post Office. This is the great domiciliary inquisition of the Government. It reaches, by long arms, with insinuating fingers, every settlement, village, city, and State capital, in forest, prairie, mountain, and plain, among the lakes and rivers of our own country, and pervades with its presence the seas throughout the



whole earth. There is not one, of its more than twenty thousand agents, who is false to the slaveholding interest, unless indeed he is so obscure as to have escaped, not merely the notice of the chief of the Department itself, but also the envy of stimulated avarice and ambition in his own neighborhood.

A circuit of half a mile has now brought us to the Departments of "War" and the "Navy." Here two energetic and far-sighted ministers, brought from the slaveholding States, and identified with their policy, wield the two great physical forces of the Republic, each ready, on receiving a despatch by telegraph, to subdue resistance to reclaimants of fugitive slaves in Boston, to disfranchising statutes in Kansas, or to slave coursers on the high seas.

Finally, in the most unpretending of all the public edifices sits the Attorney General of the United States. It belongs to the office of an Attorney General to be a willing adviser and cunning executioner of the policy of the power by whom he was appointed. When or where, in all the memorable struggles of liberty with prerogative, in this country or in Europe, has this character been more successfully illustrated than it has been by the present Attorney General, in his efforts to establish the interests of the slaveholding class, and crush out its opponents in the free States?

Fellow-citizens, you start with astonishment at the picture I have made, by simply bringing together well-known and familiar, but distant, objects into one group, and in a clear light. You say that it cannot be truthful. I reply, if it be not truthful, then let any one here, whatever may be his political bias or associations, point out a single figure that is wrongly placed on the canvass, or show a spot where the cold and passionless shadowing I have given to it ought to be mellowed.

You are impatient of my theme, but I cannot release you yet. Mark, if you please, that thus far I have only shown you the mere governmental organization of the slaveholding class in the United States, and pointed out its badges of supremacy, suggestive of your own debasement and humiliation. Contemplate now the reality of the power of that class, and the condition to which the cause of human nature has been reduced. In all the free States, the slaveholder argues and debates the pretensions of his class, and even prosecutes his claim for his slave before the delegate of the Federal Government, with safety and boldness, as he ought. He exhorts the citizens of the free States to acquiesce, and even threatens them, in their very homes, with the terrors of disunion, if that acquiescence is withheld; and he does all this with safety, as he ought, if it be done at all. He is listened to with patience, and replied to with decorum, even in his most arrogant declamations, in the Halls of Congress. Through the effective sympathy of other property classes, the slaveholding power maintains with entire safety a press and permanent political organizations in all the free States. On the contrary, if you except the northern border of Delaware, there is nowhere in any slave-

holding State personal safety for a citizen, even of that State itself, who questions the rightful national domination of the slaveholding class. Debate of its pretensions, in the Halls of Congress, is carried on at the perils of limb and life. A free press is no sooner set up in a slaveholding State, than it is demolished, and citizens who assemble peacefully to discuss even the extremest claims of Slavery are at first cautioned, and, if that is ineffectual, banished or slain, even more surely than the resistants of military despotism in the French Empire. Nor, except just now, has the case been much better, even in the free States. It is only as of yesterday, when the free citizens, assembled to discuss the exactions of the slaveholding class, were dispersed in Boston, Utica, Philadelphia, and New York. It is only as of yesterday, that when I rose, on request of citizens of Michigan, at Marshall, to speak of the great political questions of the day, I was enjoined not to make disturbance or to give offence by speaking of free soil, even on the ground which the Ordinance of 1787 had saved to Freedom. It was only as of yesterday, that Protestant Churches and Theological Seminaries, built on Puritan foundations, vied with the organs of the slaveholding class in denouncing a legislator who, in the act of making laws affecting its interests, declared that all human laws ought to be conformed to the standard of eternal justice. The day has even not yet passed when the press, employed in the service of education and morality, expurgates from the books which are put into the hands of the young all reflections on Slavery. The day yet lasts when the flag of the United States flaunts defiance on the high seas, over cargoes of human merchandise. Nor is there an American representative anywhere, in any one of the four quarters of the globe, that does not labor to suppress even there the discussion of American Slavery, lest it may possibly affect the safety of the slaveholding class at home. If, in a generous burst of sympathy with the struggling Protestant Democracy of Europe, we bring off the field one of their fallen champions, to condole with and comfort him, we suddenly discern that the mere agitation of the principles of Freedom tend to alarm the slaveholding class, and we cast him off again as a waif, not merely worthless, but dangerous to ourselves. The natural and ancient order of things is reversed; Freedom has become subordinate, sectional, and local; Slavery in its influence and combinations has become predominant, national, and general. Free, direct, and manly utterance in the cause of Freedom, even in the free States themselves, leads to ostracism, while superserviceability to the slaveholding class alone secures preferment in the national councils. The descendants of Franklin, and Hamilton, and Jay, and King, are unprized—

—"till they learn to betray,  
Undistinguish'd they live, if they shame not their sires,  
And the torch that would light them to dignity's way,  
Must be caught from the pile when their country expires."

In this course of rapid public demoralization, what wonder is it that the action of the Government tends continually with fearfully augment-

ing force to the aggrandizement of the slaveholding class? A Government can never be better or wiser, or even so good or so wise as the people over whom it presides? Who can wonder, then, that the Congress of the United States, in 1820, gave to Slavery the west bank of the Mississippi quite up to the present line of Kansas, and was content to save for Freedom, out of the vast region of Louisiana, only Kansas and Nebraska? Who can wonder that it consented to annex and admit Texas, with power to subdivide herself into five slave States, so as to secure the slaveholding class a balance against the free States then expected to be ultimately organized in Kansas and Nebraska? Who can wonder, that when this annexation of Texas brought on a war with Mexico, which ended in the annexation of Upper California and New Mexico, every foot of which was free from African Slavery, Congress divided that vast Territory, reluctantly admitting the new State of California as a free State, because she would not consent to establish Slavery, dismembered New Mexico, transferred a large portion of it to slaveholding Texas, and stipulated that what remained of New Mexico, together with Utah, should be received as slave States, if the people thereof should so demand? Who can wonder that the President, without any reproof by Congress, simultaneously offered to Spain two hundred millions of dollars for the purchase of Cuba, that it might be divided into two slaveholding States, to be admitted as members of the Federal Union, and at the same time menaced the European Powers with war if they should interfere to prevent the consummation of the purchase? Who can wonder that, emboldened with these concessions of the people, Congress at last sanctioned a reprisal by the slaveholding class upon the regions of Kansas and Nebraska, not on the ground of justice or for an equivalent, but simply on the ground that the original concession of them to Freedom was extorted by injustice and unconstitutional oppression by the free States? Who can wonder that the slaveholding class, when it had obtained the sanction of Congress to that reprisal, by giving a pledge that the people of those Territories should be perfectly free nevertheless to establish Freedom therein, invaded the Territory of Kansas with armed forces, inaugurated an usurpation, and established Slavery there, and disfranchised the supporters of Freedom by tyrannical laws, enforced by fire and sword, and that the President and Senate maintain and uphold the slaveholding interests in these culminating demonstrations of their power, while the House of Representatives lacks the power, because it is wanting in the virtue, to rescue the interests of Justice, Freedom, and Humanity? Who can wonder that Federal Courts in Massachusetts indict defenders of Freedom for sedition, and in Pennsylvania subvert the State tribunals, and pervert the *habeas corpus*, the great writ of Liberty, into a process for arresting fugitive slaves, and construe into contempt, punishable by imprisonment without bail or mainprize, the simple and truthful denial of personal control over a fugitive female slave, who has made her own volun-

tary escape from bondage? Who can wonder that in Kansas lawyers may not plead or juries be empanelled in the Federal Courts, nor can even citizens vote, without first swearing to support the Fugitive Slave Law and the Kansas and Nebraska act, while citizens who dissent through the press the right of slaveholders to domineer there, are punished with imprisonment or death; free bridges over which citizens who advocate free institutions, may pass, free taverns where they may rest, and free presses through which they may speak, are destroyed under indictments for nuisances; and those who peacefully assemble to debate the grievances of that class, and petition Congress for relief, are indicted for high treason?

Just now, the wind sets with some apparent steadiness in the North, and you will readily confess therefore that I do not exaggerate the growing aggrandizement of the slaveholding class, but you will nevertheless insist that that aggrandizement is now and may be merely temporary and occasional. A moment's reflection, however, will satisfy you that this opinion is profoundly untrue. What is now seen is only the legitimate maturing of errors unresisted through a period of more than thirty years. All the fearful evils now upon us are only the inevitable results of efforts to extinguish, by delays, concession, and compromises, a discussion to which Justice, Reason, and Humanity, are continually lending their elemental fires.

What, then, is the tendency of this aggrandizement of the slave interest, and what must be its end, if it be not now or speedily arrested? Immediate consequences are distinctly in view. The admission of Kansas into the Union as a slave State, the subsequent introduction of Slavery by means equally flagrant into Nebraska, and the admission of Utah with the twin patriarchal institutions of legalized Adultery and Slavery, and these three achievements crowned with the incorporation of Cuba into the Republic. Beyond these visible fields lies a region of fearful speculation—the restoration of the African slave trade, and the desecration of all Mexico and Central America, by the infliction upon the half-civilized Spanish and Indian races dwelling there, by our hands, of a curse from which, inferior as they are to ourselves, they have had the virtue once to redeem themselves. Beyond this area last surveyed lies that of civil and servile wars, national decline and—*ERIX*.

I fear to open up these distant views, because I know that you will attribute my apprehensions to a morbid condition of mind. But confining myself to the immediate future which is so fearfully visible, I ask you in all candor, first, whether I have ever before exaggerated the aggrandizement of the slaveholding class. Secondly, whether the movement that I now forbode is really more improbable than the evils once seemed, which are now a startling reality.

How are these immediate evils, and whatever of greater evils that are behind them, to be prevented? Do you expect that those who have heretofore counselled compromise, acquiescence, and submission, will change their course, and



come to the rescue of Liberty? Even if this were a reasonable hope, are Cass, and Douglas and Buchanan, greater or better than the statesmen who have opened the way of compromise, and led these modern statesmen into it? And if they indeed are so much greater and so much better, do you expect them to live forever?

Perhaps you expect the slaveholding class will abate its pretensions, and practice voluntarily the moderation which you wish, but dare not demand at its hands. How long, and with what success, have you waited already for that reformation? Did any property class ever so reform itself? Did the Patricians in old Rome, the Noblesse or the Clergy in France? The Landholders in Ireland? The landed Aristocracy in England? Does the slaveholding class even seek to beguile you with such a hope? Has it not become rapacious, arrogant, defiant? Is it not waging civil war against Freedom, wherever it encounters real resistance? No! no! you have let the lion and the spotted leopard into the sheep-fold. They certainly will not die of hunger there, nor retire from disgust with satiety. They will remain there so long as renewed appetite shall find multiplied prey. Be not self-deceived. Whenever a property class of any kind is invited by society to oppress, it will continue to oppress. Whenever a slaveholding class finds the non-slaveholding classes yielding, it will continue its work of subjugation.

People of Michigan, I know full well that it seems ungracious in me to dwell on this painful theme. It is not such an acknowledgment of your manifold hospitalities as you expected. It is hard for the weary mariner to look steadily on the newly-revealed rocks towards which he has too long been carelessly drifting. It is not easy for the prodigal to look with contentment on the rags and husks which meet him as he retires from the house of his harlotry. Nevertheless, there is no way of escaping any imminent danger, without first calmly and steadily looking it fully in the face, and ascertaining its real nature and magnitude.

Here again you will deny the justice of my parallels—you will claim to be merely innocent and unfortunate, and will upbraid the slaveholding class as the builders of this impending ruin. But you cannot escape so. The fault is not at all with that class, but with yourselves. The slaveholders only act according to their constitutions, education, and training. It is the non-slaveholding classes in the free States who are recreant to their own constitutions and false to their own instincts and impulses, and even to their own true interests. Who taught the slaveholding class that Freedom, which could not be wholly conquered at once, could be yielded in successive halves by successive compromises? Who taught the slaveholding class the specious theories of Non-intervention and Popular Sovereignty, and the absolute obligation of tyrannical laws enacted by armed usurpation? Your own Cass, and Douglas, and Pierce, and Buchanan. Who established Cass, Douglas, Pierce, and Buchanan, at Washington, and gave them the power to march their slaveholding armies

into Kansas? The non-slaveholding society in the free States, and no portion of that society more willingly and more recklessly than you, the People of Michigan.

You admit all this, and you ask how are these great evils, now so apparent, to be corrected—these great dangers, now so manifest, to be avoided. I answer, it is to be done, not as some of you have supposed, by heated debates sustained by rifles or revolvers at Washington, nor yet by sending armies with supplies and Sharpe's rifles into Kansas. I condemn no necessary exercise of the right of self-defence, anywhere. Public safety is necessary to the practice of the real duties of champions of Freedom. But this is a contest in which the race is not to the physically swift, nor the battle to those who have most muscular strength. Least of all is it to be won by retaliation and revenge. The victory will be to those who shall practice the highest moral courage, with simple fidelity to the principles of humanity and justice. Notwithstanding all the heroism of your champions in Washington and Kansas, the contest will be fearfully endangered, if the slaveholding class shall win the President and the Congress in this great National Canvass. Even although every one of these champions should perish in his proper field, yet the Rights of Man will be saved, and the tide of oppression will be rolled back from our Northern plains, if a President and a Congress shall be chosen who are true to Freedom. The People, and the People only, are sovereign and irresistible, whether they will the ascendancy of Slavery or the triumph of Liberty.

Harsh as my words may have seemed, I do my kinsmen and brethren of the free States no such injustice as to deny that great allowances are to be made for the demoralization I have described. We inherited complicity with the slaveholding class, and with its prejudices of caste. We inherited confidence and affection towards our Southern brethren—and with these, our political organizations, and profound reverence for political authorities, all adverse to the needful discussion of Slavery. Above all, we inherited a fear of the dissolution of the Union, which can only be unwholesome when it ceases equally to affect the conduct of all the great parties to that sacred compact. All these inheritances have created influences upon our political conduct, which are rather to be deplored than condemned. I trust that at last these influences are about to cease. I trust so, because, if we have inherited the demoralization of Slavery, we have also attained the virtue required for emancipation. If we have inherited prejudices of caste, we have also risen to the knowledge that political safety is dependent on the rendering of equal and exact justice to all men. And if we have suffered our love for the Union to be abused so as to make us tolerate the evils that more than all others endanger it, we have discerned that great error at last. If we should see a citizen who had erected a noble edifice, sit down inactively in its hall, avoiding all duty and enterprise, lest he might provoke enemies to pull it down over his head, or one who had built a ma-



jestic vessel, moor it to the wharf, through fear that he might peradventure run it upon the rocks, we should condemn his fatuity and folly. We have learned at last that the American people labor not only under the responsibility of preserving this Union, but also under the responsibility of making it subserve the advancement of Justice and Humanity, and that neglect of this last responsibility involves the chief peril to which the Union itself is exposed.

I shall waste little time on the newly-invented apologies for continued demoralization. The question now to be decided is, whether a slaveholding class exclusively shall govern America, or whether it shall only bear divided sway with non-slaveholding citizens. It concerns all persons equally, whether they are Protestants or Catholics, native-born or exotic citizens. And therefore it seems to me that this is no time for trials of strength between the native-born and the adopted freemen, or between any two branches of one common Christian brotherhood.

As little shall I dwell on merely personal partialities or prejudices affecting the candidates for public trusts. Each fitly personates the cause he represents. Beyond a doubt, Mr. Buchanan is faithful to the slaveholding class, as Mr. Fillmore vacillates between it and its opponents. I know Mr. Fremont well; and when I say that I know that he combines extraordinary genius and unquestionable sincerity of purpose with unusual modesty, I am sure that you will admit that he is a true representative of the Cause of Freedom.

Discarding sectionalism, and loving my country and all its parts, and bearing an affection even to the slaveholding class, none the less

sincere because it repels me, I cordially adopt the motto which it too often hangs out to delude us. I know no North, no South, no East, and no West; for I know that he who would offer an acceptable sacrifice in the present crisis must conform himself to the divine instructions, that neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, shall we worship the Father; but the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth.

Last of all, I stop not to argue with those who decry agitation and extol conservatism, not knowing that conservatism is of two kinds—that one which, yielding to cowardly fear of present inconvenience or danger, covers even political leprosy with protecting folds; and that other and better conservatism, that heals, in order that the body of the Commonwealth may be healthful and immortal.

Fellow-citizens, I am aware that I have spoken with seriousness amounting to solemnity. Do not infer from thence that I am despondent or distrustful of present triumph and ultimate regeneration. It has required a strong pressure upon the main-spring of the public virtue to awaken its elasticity. Such pressure has reached the centre of the spring at last. They who have reckoned that its elasticity was lost, are now discovering their profound mistake. The people of the United States have dallied long with the acactus, and floated carelessly on the calm seas that always reflect summer skies, but they have not lost their preference for their own changeless *fleur de lis*, and they consult no other guidance, in their course over the waters, than that of their own bright, particular, and constant star, the harbinger of Liberty.



